

Revive: A Tale of Two Souls - Part Four

by Aura

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Summary: Kagome and Byakuya's story continues as they meet new allies and combat their new Quincy enemies. How will Byakuya react when he finally comes to find out that Kagome is pregnant? More so when he discovers that due to no real fault of Kagome's that the child is not his? Will they survive long enough for it to matter? Part Four of the Rebirth series.

1. Chapter 1

****Revive: A Tale of Two Souls - Part Four****

Author Notes: This is the fourth part of a long on-going series. Someday I would like to go back and fix up the previous parts as there are some grammar and story issues I'd like to fix but at least for now I lack the time so reading the previous parts would really help explain how things have gotten to this point. It will be much harder to understand without it but I will give a short summary.

Summary until now: Kagome is married to Byakuya after many events that lead to them being together. However, she is also pregnant with the child of the soul society's king in this world (different than the manga definition of the King entirely), Sestran. The Quincy have begun to attack the soul society in earnest and prior to now Byakuya has been transformed into a vizard by his King to help protect the soul society but he is uncomfortable with this dark power. This story arch will in part, follow some of the manga pieces of the Quincy arch. For greater details please visit the prior parts of this series.

****Chapter One:**** Darkness Within

_"_The baby bat

>Screamed out in fright,
'Turn on the dark,

>I'm afraid of the light."

-Shel Silverstein

Explosions rocked the city. The streets of the Sereitei were flooded with warriors, the pavement was broken, the buildings cracked, and the peace it once had replaced by the noise of screams and the scent of blood. The Quincy had only waited long enough for the King to retreat to his heaven to return in force while the Soul Reapers were still licking their wounds. They'd struck the fourth squadron specifically to both finish injured enemies and keep further medical aid difficult or impossible to reach. While it didn't work as well as it would have as a full ambush it was soon enough to be effective in throwing the whole of the Sereitei into chaos. Sestran had not reappeared after his earlier fight with the Quincy leader but neither had the leader of this rabble. Instead it was many shock troops and several higher ranking Quincy battling with the central court.

Byakuya was on a series of rooftops dodging lines of fire that continued to be shot at him. An uppity brat had been sent to waylay him and not let him near the battles as far as he could tell. Each was having a difficult time pushing the other past a stand still. It didn't help that any time Byakuya began to get an upper hand this self-proclaimed 'Bazz-B' would throw a bit of fire at the troops below them and Byakuya often was throwing up Kido to help them as much as himself. Of course, he'd left himself open by protecting the others and he expected the burn to come when instead it met with a row of ice and turned into hot steam.

"Appreciated." Byakuya offered a nod of thanks to Hitsugaya before each of them returned to their prospective battles. The younger captain had given up a momentary opening to aid Byakuya and he recognized it for what it was.

_"__Sloppy."_

Without their Bankai the Captain's were hard pressed to fight the enemies beyond it seeming a standstill and they were likely to wear out before the enemies. Matsumoto had managed to help her Captain for a time but she'd been separated just as Renji and Rukia had been earlier. He could still feel them fighting in other areas of the city. A few streets beyond them he felt the reiatsu of Soi-Fong's lieutenant go out. Several of the enemy troops ran by from another zone screaming about the shadows from where Kyoraku had been earlier.

_"__Here you are getting outdone by the Captain that would rather play hide and seek."_

Byakuya grit his teeth and dove in, taking a burn along the back of his arm but also delivering a deep blow inside the pit of Bazz-B's arm before being forced to retreat. The smell of burned flesh reached his nose and while he wasn't actively on fire, he felt as if he'd been. From his elbow to his shoulder his skin had been blackened. It was more of a risk than he'd calculated.

"Come on big guy, that all you got? Here I heard you took out As Nodt and this is all you are capable of?" the upstart laughed. "No wonder all the soul reapers are going to lose if you are the cream of the

crop."

"_You need not let such mockery stand."_

He was having a harder time ignoring the dark thoughts that seemed to only get louder with his injuryâ€|but he had a feeling the plan was to get him to release his dark half. He lacked the training to actually control himself after all and they could be banking on using him losing control to actively target him.

"_As if it would matter if they turned millions of blades on usâ€|"_

Several buildings crashed down where Kenpachi was battling, not surprising but they were close to where he'd left Kagome and it gave him a moment of pause. He scowled at the area, it was still too covered in dust to tell what exact buildings were in the damage but he needed to check in on herâ€|

"Don't look away from me." Bazz sounded impertinent at Byakuya's distraction. "I've been going easy on you but not anymore."

"Danku." Byakuya remarked, buying himself a few more seconds to try and gauge where Kenpachi city damages were exactlyâ€|they were a bit wide to know for certain. Moments after the fire slammed into his protective barrier it was already starting to shatter.

"_What can you hope to accomplish when your body is at its limit? I can protect herâ€|while you cannot even reach herâ€|"_

The Quincy abilities were at a level the Sereitei was not prepared for and he knew itâ€|he still ignored his inner voice. He wouldn't use such abilities unless he couldn't help it, besides the dark voice wasn't telling the complete truth, he wasn't at his limit yet. He'd fight with the rest of the captains to defend their own to the best of his ability without using the wretched maskâ€|though he was growing steadily more concerned that wouldn't be an option. He'd have to trust that Kagome could take care of herself as he dodged away again, distracting himself wouldn't help either he or her right now.

Elsewhereâ€|

A moment of respite was all Kagome received, by morning the entire Sereitei was enveloped in war, she was sitting in a closet frustrated that she couldn't help. She had been told by Byakuya to remain here while he joined the others in battle against the reinvigorated attack of the Quincy. Normally she would have ignored his orders and followed himâ€|but this time she couldn't. She had to worry about more than her own lifeâ€|it was a feeling very alien to the headstrong girl. She could feel all the energy around her, and more disturbingly, when it went out. There were people dying around her in the city but she remained despite a great desire to help because of concern for her own unborn child. She was determined to stay out of trouble but as it often did with Kagome, trouble found her.

An explosion shook the earth and the ground beneath her opened up sending her tumbling into the darkness, it was several bounces before she hit something solid enough to hold her body but it also knocked the wind from her. Kagome coughed, then gasped, then coughed again.

She pushed herself up holding her sleeve over her mouth to try and keep from breathing in the dust in the air. She could barely make anything out around her except for crumbling rocks but she could feel that the floor was worked, it was too smooth to be a cave. Had she fallen into the sewers? It didn't smell like a lower level then?

Another rock twice the size of her head slammed into the ground next to her and she stumbled forward, not wanting to get crushed by any other debris dislodged by the continued quakes taking place above. At the same time, she didn't want to wander too far, Byakuya was bound to come looking for her.

She summoned the one spell she could cast reliably and threw a light spell into the air revealing a long hallway. There was dust caking the floor and a few benches in the halls though this was obviously the first time it had been disturbed in a long time. Kagome walked further in as more rocks came down a little concerned the destabilized roof would fall in. Several of the doors lead to more halls, she paused to wipe off one of the labels near a doorway. "Record Keeping" Inside she could see several shelves but they were open and empty with a few scraps of parchment here and there beneath the dust. She frowned at that and moved to the next one. "Offices" It was another hall of doors but she could guess by the label where they lead. The following door was closed and there was a lock but it came free when Kagome pulled only a little the whole place was deteriorating from age. Kagome wiped off the label. "Off limits."

Curiosity got the better of her and she opened the door, it was yet another hall of doors and she frowned, how large was this underground area exactly? The war above sounded like a thunderstorm down here, and dust fell from the ceiling with another large boom. Thankfully despite the decrepit state of the area the infrastructure of the halls held. Then she heard voices behind her.

"She slipped into the hallway behind her." It wasn't a voice she recognized. Whoever it was they were likely up to no good. She frowned and slipped into the off limits door, doing her best to move away from the central area quietly. She slipped into another door and closed it behind her when she heard someone walking in the first hallway. This was not good not good at all.

"Kagome? Are you all right?" The voice was familiar she definitely knew it. What was he doing here? "It's Ishida, Byakuya sent me to look for you."

She almost fell for it. She was about to walk out but she remembered that Ishida was a Quincy was he working with the enemy then? She turned back to the room she'd gone into it seemed like an office for several more doors. She dashed toward one, wanting to get away from this possible threat and entered what looked like a laboratory. The research squad used to have space under the 6th? She coughed again and held her sleeve tighter over her face, the smell of chemicals was mixed with the dust. There were several tubes with wires and cords coming from them but the staleness of the smells showed how long it'd been since this place had been open. No one would probably even know to look for her here.

"Kagome. I can see your trail of where you've been in the dust. This

place isn't stable, we should get out of here and talk somewhere safe." Ishida sounded honest in his concern but Kagome was still wary—why would he even be here if not to help the other Quincy? It's not as though the squads would have asked mortals or other Quincy for help. She rushed across the lab after spotting another door—perhaps she could find a weapon somewhere.

In her rush she tripped over one of the many tubes in the room, coughing as she was forced to remove the cloth from her face to catch herself. She glanced back, tempted to kick the offending cord but then realized it was a leg. There was a mummified corpse that had fallen off of one of the research tables. There were still dozens of wires and iv's attached to the body but all of the fluids had long run dry, this environment must have caused the corpse to mummify. She didn't have time to dwell on it, getting up to continue running.

"There you are, where are you going?" Ishida's voice drew her up short of continuing her run. He had reached the room. "Come on, we should get out of here."

His clothes were similar enough to the uniforms the invading army wore that she felt her nervousness was more than reasonable.

"What are you doing here Ishida?" She asked, still glancing around the room for something she could use as a weapon. She really had to do more combat training with her husband sometime—she knew she could do a little but Ishida was more trained than her—and who knew what he was willing to do now—

"Byakuya asked me to find you." He said, walking closer then raising a brow at her as she backed up. She was smarter than he gave her credit for—then this was an order he hadn't really had time to prepare for. Still, this was what he had to do. "We can talk when we get out of her—come on, this place could come down if Kenpachi's fight moves overhead."

"Stop Ishida." Kagome commanded aloud when the boy started to walk again, happy that he did. "Tell me what they want, there's no way Byakuya sent you."

"I will tell you—but not here—" Ishida insisted, he moved toward her again reaching a hand out toward her and Kagome was about to knock his arm away when Ishida was tackled from behind by the mummified body—it was alive? She stared in shock as the near corpse slammed Ishida's head into the floor hard enough to knock him unconscious then bit him. Gulping sounds left little wonder as to what the corpse was doing to Ishida—what sort of monster was this?

****End Chapter****

I was torn between starting this as a new fic or continuing it here. Eventually I decided this should be its own story arch — partly in thanks to comments from my reviewers so thanks for that :). I hope I continue to have a little time to work on it. We'll see where my muse takes me but I've been in a mood for Bleach lately.

__-Aura_

To my reviewers:

I'll remark here as needed to questions/comments that I feel everyone might benefit from.

2. Parasitic

****Chapter Two:** *_Parasitic_***

_"_Every man has inside himself a parasitic being who is acting not at all to his advantage."_

****_-William S. Burroughs_***

Kagome's desire to help Ishida had never been high to begin with and once he was trying to kidnap her she only hesitated a moment before leaving him to his fate with the monster and running. She was afraid if she didn't hurry out of here that she would be next. She didn't even look back as she dashed out the lab and through the halls trying to get back to the cave inâ€|she could hopefully find a way to climb free of this placeâ€|what if there were more of those monsters here?

She could still light filtering in from the cave in, rocks still tumbling in from the edges from the blows to the city streets above by the powerful combatants wreaking destruction from their battles. It was dangerous since it was still caving in but somehow more welcoming than what she'd left behind her. She was starting to reach up to find a way out when a hand wrapped around her arm and pulled her down, Kagome screamed as she slid along the ground, staring in shock at the transformation to the monster.

As opposed to the mummified corpse of before, there was a man in the same tattered clothing before her, mismatched red and grey eyes manic with hunger as he stalked toward where he'd tossed her. He was still gaunt, but this was the monster that was only a mummy moments agoâ€|she grabbed his hands when he reached for her, struggling with him.

"Stop it! Don't!" She protested, but it was of little avail, he had exceptional strength and it only took a few moments before he had her arms pinned down. Even calling on her energy wasn't helping, his hands were burning but he wasn't letting her go. His fangs paused just after pricking her flesh with her next statement. "I'm pregnantâ€|pleaseâ€|"

The word pregnant had been the one to cause him to freeze. She hadn't said it aloud since she learned it from Sestran but now seemed as good a time as any to try and get the monster to stop. The creature instead set his ear on her neck, listening a long moment before he rolled them both to their feet and he set her down. Like most of the men in her life he was taller than her but so much so that he might as well be a giant, they had over a foot of difference between them. He still had wires sticking from his skin in several places and the burns that had appeared on his hands from her magic were visibly healing.

"My apologiesâ€|" He stated in a polite tone she didn't expect, his voice was raspy and lightâ€|difficult to make out above the white

noise of the battle above them. "It's been sometime since I've eatenâ€¦I let my appetite get the best of me."

â€¦

He was dusting off her shoulders and ticking debris from her hair and all Kagome could do was stare, this day kept getting more confusing. What was this thing?

"Um, hiâ€¦?" She finally managed.

"Yesâ€¦manners." He cleared his throat but it was still weak, probably from having been down here so longâ€¦just how long had he been here? "I apologize, call meâ€¦Nihil."

"Youâ€¦are a vampire?" Kagome ventured the question. Byakuya had mentioned something to her once about spiritual vampires with a silly name she couldn't recall.

"No, no not exactlyâ€¦well possibly I supposeâ€¦it would depend on the exact definition of the term," He answered, glancing around as if taking the room in for the first time. He started to take all the iv's and other wires out of his flesh and even when he started to bleed it didn't last longâ€¦he seemed to very swiftly regenerate. "I'm not entirely sure what I am to be honestâ€¦what's happening here?"

"Ishidaâ€¦did you kill him?" Kagome was nervous but she had to admit that as much as she was frustrated with the boy's involvement she didn't want him dead.

"Ishida?" The man considered her a moment calculating before realization entered his gaze. "Oh, noâ€¦I don't think so. He'll need some medical careâ€¦but it seems there are more pressing issuesâ€¦what is happening above us?"

"Well ahâ€¦" Kagome blinked, not sure how she could explain to this strange creature. "The courts are at war with the Quincy and it's pretty bad, they are breaking up the city a lot in their combats. That's how I fell down hereâ€¦and uh, found you."

"I haven't seen you about the squadronsâ€¦" He observedâ€¦then shook his head. "No matter, the more pressing matter is the battleâ€¦if we are under attack I'll need to help. Where is my zanpakuto?"

Kagome had been hoping in her description that he would be an ally but the last thing she was expecting was for him to say that he was a soul reaperâ€¦

****Elsewhereâ€¦****

The battles were decimating the cities infrastructure more than the ruler would like and Sestran was pacing as he glanced to the orb that offered him the rule of his currently struggling city. Still, it would be unwise to unlock heaven while this threat existedâ€¦the Quincy ruler hadn't returned and he had to gamble that his own army would be able to defend against this ambush. As it was he was concerned this wouldn't be the best the Quincy would throw at them.

It didn't help that Byakuya was resisting the new power he'd attainedâ€|though the noble's refusal to use vizard abilities shouldn't surprise Sestran. Pride was quite obviously Byakuya's sin of choice after all. Still, his battle was going better than many of the others. His troops weren't winning, they were barely holding their own. He was considering if he would be forced to get involved or notâ€|there was a difference between a threat to heaven and a threat to everything that had been built by his ancestors. If the court fell, so too would his ability to ever again leave heavenâ€|the doors had to be opened from this side after allâ€|

He tapped the side of his hip with his hand, the twitch outside of his usual demeanor a physical show of just how desperately he wanted to get involved. Then an unfamiliar energy source was approaching the battle, the orb swirled and focused in on the battles near Hitsugaya and Byakuya. There was a man in rags approaching the battle that he didn't know, was he one of the Quincy then? Kagome wasn't far away, Sestran noticed her hiding in one of the buildings doorways and he nearly turned to leave. Then the new person on the field drew a wakazashi, shorter than the usual shape but clearly a Zanpakuto. How was there a soul reaper he didn't recognize? What was going on?

The tall man set the blade against his opposite palm and then muttered something as he shoved the length of the weapon into his hand. As opposed to the splurge of blood expected from such an action instead his flesh rippled and as his hands pulled back they were covered in long claws. The metal seemed to grow straight from the man's skin with veins of the silver color wrapping upward around his upper arms in vein like patterns. The claw like weapons themselves were serrated and segmented in several joints. The man ran swiftly toward one of the quincy, flash stepping with enough speed that he managed to surprise them. They were as unfamiliar with his identity then?

Sestran canted his head, still tempted to return but hoping the extra unexpected combatant would drive them back enough that he wouldn't be forced to.

****_The front lineâ€|_****

Byakuya was just as surprised by the new presence on the field as he was that Kagome was out hereâ€|he wanted to tell her to go away but as far as he could tell the enemies hadn't targeted her yet so he was hesitant to bring attention to her. Instead he dodged back as several more lines of fire shot through the rooftop where he'd been standing seconds before. He shot a ray of light back at the enemy and as usual they came to another standstill. Byakuya frowned but he was growing waryâ€|

_"__Let me finish this, I'll safeguard herâ€|what can you do?" _

As Byakuya fought his inner demons Hitsugaya wasn't about to refuse the help of the new soul reaper, surprising as it was. He was able to give himself a moment to breath as the new hand to hand person took over. "Thanksâ€|"

If Nyhil heard the appreciation he didn't remark on it, he was diving at his foe with a forceful vigor of someone fresh to the field of battle. He traded several blows with the enemy and took his own wounds but managed to get in a few of his own.

"Unexpectedâ€|" The black haired man remarked. "Did you hear anything about this one Bazz-B?"

"Does it matter? Just kill him like the rest." Bazz called back, though he was still focused on his own assignment of knocking the captain over the edge. Though so far he hadn't really gotten far and was losing patience. "Burner finger 4."

The fire curled toward Byakuya and knocked him back and down, burns along his flesh despite having gotten out of the path of some of the attack. Meanwhile Hitsugaya was forced back by his own iceâ€|the Sternritter that had stolen his bankai using it against them. Nyhil was also forced to jump back but he dove directly back at the battleâ€|pausing on the ground only a moment before throwing himself at the enemy. His claws bounced free and sparked against skin that was iron during this assault.

"Lucky for Hitsugaya that you jumped in but you won't get more hits in now that I know your style." Cang Du remarked, smirking at the opponent. Though Nyhil leapt back at another burst from the sigil holding the bankai. He was considering the feel of the reiatsu and glanced toward Hitsugaya questioningly.

"They can steal Bankai." Hitsugaya stated, unsure what the new at least for the time, ally was looking for.

"That's new." Nyhil answered, dodging again when Cang leapt at him shooting the ends of his claws in return, they bounced off of Cang's skin. "Hmm, his ability is troublesome as well. Ah well, it won't matterâ€|are you going to manage here? I would like to help other battles if I can."

"I think we'll be all rightâ€|but youâ€|who are you?" Hitsugaya stepped in and met blades with the Quincy when Nyhil didn't move to defend himself from an attackâ€|but the strength in the attacker's arms was less than before.

"Nyhilâ€|and I would assume much has changed since I was takenâ€|" He remarked, leaping away from their battle and forcing Hitsugaya to glance at his opponent in confusion when the Quincy suddenly froze up and fell to his knees as though he was having a muscle spasm. "What?"

"Bastard." The Quincy let out a self-depreciating bark of laughter. "It seems I took you all too lightlyâ€|"

"Stop playing around Cang." Bazz called from the rooftops, throwing more fire at the downed Byakuya, he'd prefer to just finish it instead of forcing the Captain to snap.

"He got to me before I put up my shield. There is something in his claws, a poison or perhaâ€|" Cang was interrupted as his jaw locked, he was swiftly losing control of his jointsâ€|he was hard pressed to run away when Hitsugaya sent a line of frost at him. He had to leave Bazz to his ownâ€|Cang barely retreated to a back line when he fell on his face, unable to move. None too soon since he felt the explosion of energy from Byakuya's release of his vizard form a moment after he'd disappearedâ€|he likely wouldn't have survived had he remained there.

Bazz-B meanwhile was thrown from the rooftop with a backhand before the burst of reiatsu had actually reached him. The backhand had shattered his jaw and tossed several teeth from his mouth. He barely caught himself as the ground came up on him but he wasn't given time to respond before the sword cut across his chest and he only barely raised a hand to block Senbonzakura before it would have gone into his chest instead. Where the hell was Haschwalth?

Of course, no sooner than he considered his childhood friend than the second in command appeared and blocked the next sword strike. He glanced to Bazz-B and his disheveled state, watching as Bazz spit out a few teeth. Other Quincy began to appear as well, taking on the new Shinigami and Hitsugaya so Haschwalth was left defending against the raging Byakuya. He asked Bazz a question nonetheless. "Will you be able to follow through with the plan?"

"Easier said than done but I'll manageâ€|Cang was already taken out. Not sure where he ran toâ€|no one expected claws megeee over there." Bazz answered, frowning at how easily Haschwalth had blocked the creature that had just cut him down. Was there this much difference between them? Noâ€|he'd already been fighting for some timeâ€|he was just getting a little worn. "I'll do what I have to."

"Then get to it." Haschwalth disappeared and Bazz released a burst of fire on the masked vizard facing himâ€|but winced when it was deflected slightly, the monster ignoring burns along it's arm as it dove for him. This was going to be a challenging battleâ€|but then Byakuya vanishedâ€|he'd caught onto their ploy. He was too late however, Haschwalth was already pulling Kagome through a gate, the girl only registering the change with enough time to widen her eyes. It'd been a while since she'd been successfully kidnappedâ€|and she wasn't expecting the monstrous expression and the change to Byakuya's face with the mask as he dashed to try and get herâ€|their fingers barely missing each other. Apparently they each hadn't been completely honest with one anotherâ€|she wanted to say a lot of things, to ask dozens of questions, but the last face she got wasn't really that of her loverâ€|just some strange thing that looked a lot like himâ€|

****End Chapter****

Still getting back into the scheme of things. New ally of sorts. Gotta start restocking the soul reapers that have died. Alsoâ€|I have always wanted to see a Byakuya Haschwalth fightâ€|so that may or may not be coming up here in this story XD. I haven't kidnapped Kagome much in this storyline so I figured I should finally get around to it. Besides it is a reason for her to interact with the Quincy.

-Aura-

To my reviewers:

3. Doors

****Chapter Three:****Doors****

"__A very little key will open a very heavy door.__"

**** - Charles Dickens, **** ****_Hunted Down_****

"NO!" Kagome's protest came after the gate she'd been pulled through had already closed. She stared at the wall that was left before her, and as disturbed as Byakuya's appearance had made her she'd prefer it to whatever this enemy had in store for her. She frowned, she knew that she had to be careful—it was the only reason she resisted the urge to slap her kidnapper—instead glancing to the blonde that had taken her but he wasn't looking at her —" his mind was elsewhere.

"I must go—there is other business that requires my attention. Remain in these quarters." Haschwalth stated as he opened a door.

"No, no, no." Kagome shook her head immediately, not even looking around. You don't get to kidnap me and just wander off. What the hell do you want with me?"

"That is a question for his Majesty." Haschwalth replied in the same tone of voice. He was out the door a moment later and Kagome followed but found herself locked in. She kicked the door and yelled after him but she only earned silence in return for her effort.

Where had he brought her?

A look around showed she was in a humble but nice room. Bed, desk, bookshelf, dresser, connecting bathroom—a balcony overlooking a dark city. So it was night here? Where ever here was—the short glance did let her know there was no easy escape. She backed up and stared at the door, holding up her hands to focus on it, she might as well and try to 'repair' it. A moment later, as normal, the wood shattered on its frame—she was able to push herself free and dashed down one of the long hallways outside. Why did dead people always have such long hallways?

She slowed when she heard voices.

"We can still fight for your majesty!" The protest was threaded with fear and Kagome swallowed as she edged closer—not wanting to be seen.

"Be grateful for your luck—" It was the voice of her kidnapper. "However, the scales of the fight must be fair. The life saved by your good luck—will be terminated by the same amount of misfortune."

They were killing their own?

"Wait—wait please—" The protest died on the man's lips. When the scene came into view Kagome was lucky she didn't gasp—one of them was already bleeding on the floor. The other was about to be hit but Haschwalth's sword stopped on the second prisoner's shoulder. The man was the same one Nyhil had been fighting—that had disappeared.

"Did you forget my power?" Cang asked. He sounded bitterly amused. "The Iron. It's Easy for me—to stop a blade like yours. Cut me down if you're able. I won't be killed by anyone but his majesty!"

Kagome frownedâ€|they didn't mind being killed? That seemed extremeâ€|nearby was the leaderâ€|the one that had left when confronted by Sestran. He was just observing howeverâ€|Kagome glanced between themâ€|not certain what to do. The hairs on the back of her neck going up when Haschwalth started to speak again.

"I see. Wonderful. Your second bit of good luck. Can you seeâ€|" Haschwalth was as self-assured as Byakuya or Sesshomaru when he said it. She could make out a small shimmer of scales over himâ€|the man about to be attacked suddenly looked afraid as wellâ€| "â€|the tilted scales."

"Stoâ€|" Kagome's protest again didn't reach them in timeâ€|the man was already cut down the middle, and she'd brought attention to herselfâ€|but she didn't want to see thatâ€|why were they executing their own.

"The priestess," The leader speaking made her just as nervous as Haschwalth's merciless attackâ€|Kagome didn't really understand his power but she knew she didn't want to be subject to that.

"I apologize your majesty. I will do a better job of holding her in the future." Haschwalth remarked, walking back toward Kagome calmly, as though he hadn't just murdered two of his own soldiers. Kagome turned and ran back down the hall, she shouldn't have brought attention to herself. She made it through a few doors before nearly dashing right into the blonde man that had taken her, she barely came up short of running into him and looked up at him nervously.

"Hey what's that?" Kagome asked, pointing behind Haschwalth but he didn't buy into her 'oldest trick in the book'.

"This will notâ€|"

Haschwalth's calm demeanor broke as he realized she was casting her spell at him, throwing up an arm and stepping back as his arm broke out in wounds. He glanced up in confusion, that chant had been one for healing, but she had already run by him.

"â€|aid your cause."

He appeared next to her again, holding down both her arms this time.

"Let go of meâ€|" Kagome struggled but couldn't get herself free this timeâ€|frowning as she felt the warm sticky liquid transferred from his arm to hers.

"If you escape my care, the others are under orders to kill you. They will show no more hesitation than you've seen me give." Haschwalth replied, his remark enough to make her pause in her struggles. He had to give the girl she had more to her than he expected.

"What do you want from me?" Kagome asked after her moment of deflating, looking directly into his eyes, determined not to balk. He reminded her slightly of Sestran, the golden hair was much lighter â€" almost a pastel yellow compared to the King's, but he had the same aura of authority. Still, she'd been ignoring it from Sestran for so long that it made it easier to push it aside now. He seemed

slightly surprised as he stared back at her.

"His Majesty wished to separate you. You are not our enemy, the priests are distantly related to the Quincy after all—and there are few of them that remain." Haschwalth answered, taking a step back as the girl stared at him intently, now that she didn't seem as if she would run again. "As long as you remain my ward and in the areas I open to you then no harm will come to you."

Kagome immediately started considering ways to escape but she was also afraid to try again—she could have been hurt just in this last rash decision. She'd attacked him after seeing how willing he was to murder someone else. It was irresponsible—not with her needing to be concerned about another life.

"If you will not return to the quarters willingly—"

"No, I will—" Kagome interrupted, she didn't need to hear where the threat would go. "—though I still don't understand why you are doing this. What did the soul reapers do to you?"

"Clarity will be shed on the subject, come."

****_In Soul Society—_****

Bazz-B had barely escaped Byakuya's wrath—and if he was more trained in his abilities then the Quincy wouldn't have. Instead he had fallen unconscious after pressing the Quincy out of his realm. The Shinigami had defended themselves for now but how long before the enemies would strike yet again? They hadn't waited long after the last skirmish after all. That all aside, they'd taken Kagome—and he had to hope that they wouldn't kill her. His nightmares when he was unconscious were difficult to remember in detail but he knew they involved her torment.

Nearby, in the makeshift doctor's camp that had been set up by what remained of squadron 4, he came to hearing people explaining the general situation. The voice of the man that had stepped in and helped them was asking questions or confirming theories.

"I've been gone for some time then—" Nyhil remarked, thoughtful as opposed to regretful. "Things certainly aren't looking up but I'll do what I can to help. What about the girl they took?"

"Kagome?" Hitsugaya asked. "She'll be fine, she always manages. Not sure what they want her for—but from what I can tell the problem they have is with soul reapers so I would think they wouldn't harm her."

"Such villainy, kidnapping a woman with child." Nyhil's voice was filled with distaste then. "Only those incapable of their own power would do such a thing."

"Child?" Byakuya forced his eyes open so he could ask. "Is that true?"

"Back into consciousness?" Nyhil asked, walking over and looking at Byakuya thoughtfully. This man was helping squadron 4 with the injured? At least he wasn't still in the tattered rags from before, now he wore a red and black haori over a fresh squadron uniform. "You

took a lot of burn damageâ€|I'm surprised at how much you've healed already. Quite strong to already be regaining consciousness."

"Kagomeâ€|you said she was with child." Byakuya returned to the point he was interested in.

"Yes. Yes, I could sense the differences in her body myself. Still an extremely early state but definitely pregnant." Nyhil replied. "I presume you are the other parent?"

Byakuya's ability to fight off his wariness came to a closeâ€|he was shocked but happyâ€|he would be a father then? He'd never expected this newsâ€|and without rest and training he wouldn't be able to get her back from them. It was shameful that he'd fallen at allâ€|but he would fix itâ€|all of itâ€|he would win back her trust fully after what had happenedâ€|and he would take care of them bothâ€|

His final thoughts as he passed into unconsciousness is that he would have a family again.

****_Silbern (Quincy Land) â€" _****

"Soâ€|many years ago this guy was lonely and afraid and he is all soul powerâ€|or whatever, so then when people realized they got things from him they named him god and he went along." Kagome was putting the story into her own words, not noticing the slight twitching of the blonde's eyebrow at her choice of words. "Then he started using his powers to conquer people and got sealed away and now he will take over the world or something inâ€|seven or eight more days. Andâ€|you just are going along with this? Doesn't it seem a little cultish?"

"His majesty's will is absolute." Haschwalth answered.

"_â€|_is exactly what an obsessed cultist would say." _ Kagome thought in irritation but kept to herself, instead trying a different tactic now that strange storytelling time was over. "Why do you hate the soul reapers so much?"

"They are imperfect. He will take power from the current ruler and remake the world without them." Haschwalth continued to reply calmly. He'd only left a moment before explaining the story to her to heal his arm. Kagome wasn't sure what to think of all of this. They wanted her to just sit on the sidelines? She wasn't too happy about thatâ€|besides, if she was suddenly not useful or a threat they could just kill her.

A whisper in her mind made her blink in surprise. There was no mistaking that Sestran had sent her a small message. What the hell was he playing at? Staring at the blonde near her it was clear he hadn't heard it or felt anything amiss. Though he did cant his head at her as though curious what had disturbed her all of a sudden.

"It's been a long dayâ€|I promise I'll stay here and behave if you'll come back after I've rested to check in on me." Kagome explained.

"I will have a member of the sternritterâ€|"

"No, not themâ€|you." Kagome insisted. "I'm already uncomfortable here and you're the only one I've talked to. I'd rather not have random strangers, well more strange than you, checking in on me."

She hoped he would buy her excuse. His somewhat skeptical expression told her he already knew that she was probably up to something. However, he didn't call her on it or press her as to what it was that had bothered her.

"This is an acceptable compromise; I will return with food come morning." He said after a moment of considering her then left the room.

Kagome closed her eyes and put hands over her face, replaying what Sestran had just told her she should do, what was the King up to now?

_"__Convince him to kiss youâ€|"_

****End Chapter****

I promise there are plot reasons that will come in, unless readers that have followed this series the entire time can already guess. Man, I missed working on this series. Sadly I can't get too far into this part (not that I won't have a few chapters yet) until more of the actual manga is releasedâ€|kubo is so slowâ€| : (

-Aura

4. Etiquette

****Chapter Four:**** ****_Etiquette_****

_"__Be polite; write diplomatically; even in a declaration of war one observes the rules of politeness."_

****_-Otto von Bismarck_****

Sestran's link to Kagome had given him access to the description of the plans the enemy had and their history. He didn't recall this Yhwach but that's likely because he was still very young when the Quincy leader was first banished according to this intelligence. Sestran frowned as he watched, Haschwalth's dedication was clear to the eavesdropper. It would be difficult to deal with all of the Quincy, and this one had an energy that had matched up to Byakuya even with his vizard side. It was less than favorableâ€|but if they could turn him.

That's when he had the ideaâ€|they could possibly turn him. If Kagome could get him to kiss her, then majesty might take effect. It was a long shot, but possible since it was the royal line that she carried inside her. The power could transfer from the unborn child to Kagome to keep it safe in a time of danger and Kagome was certainly far from safe. It wasn't without effort that he was able to press his powers to the point of sending her a messageâ€|to say the least he was relieved when the enemy left Kagome alone for a while and Sestran was able to drop the spell that allowed him to look through the orb.

He wavered, catching himself on the edge of the balcony—he'd pushed himself too much lately—and now was far from a time where he wanted to rest. Particularly since the enemy was likely searching for a way to break through the gate. Still, not resting would only make him weaker if they did break through. With more than a little frustration the King took himself to rest, preparation for the battles to come would need to include his own good health.

In Soul Society

"Damages were heavy, even with the Captain-Commander replaced we're still in a bad spot, it could be the death of us if they attack too soon." Nyhil pointed out bluntly, having been invited to a captain's meeting.

"We'll need to keep preparing as though that is about to happen." Kyoraku remarked. He was the one that had stepped into Yamamoto's place when the Captain Commander died. It was his decision to make Nyhil the temporary de-facto leader of the medical squadron despite not knowing the man long. With Unohana gone they needed someone to take on the spot and the strange 'more than shinigami' wasn't doing a poor job of it other than a couple small incidents.

"What about this guy—who's to say he's not a plant from the enemy?" Soi Fong expressed her own misgivings toward the new 'acting captain' and there were some glances around the room that indicated she wasn't alone in her concerns.

"For what purpose would the enemy need me to infiltrate the court squads? They appear to have the upper hand from what I've gathered since my return." Nyhil stated logically, shrugging at her when she sent him a glare. "Pride aside, I was an asset in the last battle. This discussion is a waste of valuable time."

"You—"

"He's right—" Hitsugaya sighed at having to admit it. "If he hadn't been there we probably would have lost more people. They were planning to target Captain Kuchiki down but Nyhil's interruption made that impossible as opposed to difficult for them. We have no reason to label him an enemy at the moment."

"Fine, whatever, what's the next plan? Counterattack?" Kenpachi asked, he'd only woken up recently after the battles and then his free for all with Unohana. He still had several bandages but had brought himself to the meeting anyway—better than being stuck on a stretcher.

"Unlikely—they'll be returning here and we need to protect the gate. I already have several experts in kido and members of the corps building lines of wards but it'll only help for so long with the Quincy ability to diffuse reiatsu. It'll buy us time but that's all."

"We'll need to set up ambushes." Soi Fong recommended, it was in her field to help out in that area being the leader of the stealth corps.

"That'll be the start—we'll need—"

They spoke well into the afternoon, discussing possible plans and giving orders as to what the next steps would be for underlings. Byakuya remained unconscious after his flicker of wakefulness, still needing to heal after pushing back Bazz B but getting bombed by yet another of the Quincy. His body had been almost completely covered in third-degree burnsâ€|but in his mind he was still doing training of his own even while unconscious.

****_Silbern (Quincy Land) â€" _****

Kagome woke with a start, shuttering and holding the sheet closer to her chest as she stared out the windowed doors of her prison's balcony. It was a nightmare she'd had a lot lately, Byakuya attacking her after he'd forgotten about her. Only tonight it had altered, his masked face and eyes black with gold, monstrous and uncontrolled as he brought his sword down at her. She dug her fingers into the pillowâ€|the moisture already stinging her eyesâ€|she sobbed into the pillow not wanting any possible guards to hear her grief.

After all they'd been through she couldn't forget his attackâ€|her subconscious wouldn't let her, and now she had a new secret to fear. What had happened to him? Was this the fault of the Quincy or something else? Did he even know about it to tell her before now? She needed to fix her relationship with Byakuya but how could they repair anything if they weren't even together on the same world? Particularly when she was pregnant with another man's child and was being told to basically seduce a third into kissing her. The soul society was facing an enemy like she'd never seen them have to face and her entire world seemed to be crumbling around her.

She shot up when the door opened but kept her back to it.

"Good morning, are you well rested?" His tone was polite but neutral and he set something on her desk in the room. Probably food, she supposed at least they weren't starving her but it was far from a good time.

"Morning." Kagome stated shortly, hoping he wouldn't recognize the sorrow in her voice. Still not looking at him, it was a battle enough to keep her body from wracking with emotion.

"When you are finished, I'll beâ€|" He paused when she got up, raising a brow when he noticed her red wet face and puffy cheeks. She pulled the covers around her and drug them with her.

"Excuse me." She stated, moving to the bathroom. It was clear she was trying to hide that he'd just walked in on her crying. The sniffs that echoed from the bathroom a moment later gave her away, it was strange to see her in tears as it went against all of their intelligence on her.

Kagome meanwhile fought to get her emotions under control. This wasn't anything she couldn't handle; she'd been kidnapped beforeâ€|of course not under the same circumstances but she had to stop showing such weakness to them. She got water to wash her face so it wouldn't be so obvious and blew her nose, composing herself before returning to her room, a little relieved that the blonde wasn't still inside. She walked up to the desk, she didn't feel like eating but her stomach disagreed and she would need to keep her strength up. Folded next to the breakfast tray was a small note in an elegant

script.

_"Kagome. The library is within the areas you have permission to visit, if you wish to spend your time somewhere other than your room. Four doors down. " Haschwalth."

"joy, I have a thoughtful kidnapper." Kagome thought sarcastically "of course he was better than the demon brothers that were her first real kidnapping in the feudal era. Honestly for the damage she'd done to him he'd been pretty nice to her"she sighed and picked at her food as she fretted over what she should do.

"Convince him to kiss me how exactly? Dammit Sestran, couldn't you have given more than five words?" She pushed her eggs around with her fork as she chewed a previous bite. She knew Sestran wouldn't have told her that if it wasn't importantbut what was he up to? They knew a lot about her and her life, there is no way they could have missed the 'married to Byakuya Kuchiki' part. Besides, wasn't it a little dangerous to go around making buddy-buddy with the guy that was all psycho fanboy for his pedo-stache leader?

Then there was the power he'd usedwith the scalesand his words about it. He kept the balance with his abilities somehow? He'd used it to cut through someone a moment after his sword had been blocked. Could he really alter his abilities just as easily as tipping a scale then? Kagome took another few bites as her train of thought went in circles. She took her time with her food because she was nervous that the second in command would be thereand she didn't think she was ready to suddenly go undercover for Sestran and semi-seduce an enemy that even held off Byakuya with a certain ease.

Still, she had toshe had to do somethingand this was the only real path she had that wasn't incredibly dangerouseven if Haschwalth caught onto her he wouldn't be able to kill her if it was against orders? Wandering down to the door he wrote her the note about she found the room labeled library and went inside.

It wasn't as grand as the libraries she'd been to in the Sereitei, it didn't have multiple stories, but there were books on every wall and stacks here and there in the room making it seem smaller and more snug than it was at first glance. It was very long, which certainly made up for the lack of height. Kagome was glad she didn't see anyone elsethey were probably all off working. Instead she started browsing the shelves. It was more organized and modern than she expected but she didn't mind thatwalking along and glancing at the labels, looking for fiction. She might find some story to lose herself in that way

"Unexpected," The single word made her jump, she'd presumed herself alone but the build of the room had hidden the blonde reader. Kagome took a deep breath, holding a hand to her chest at the surprise, her heart was racingthis was what she'd not wanted to do yet

"Uhm?" She giggled nervously. God she was bad at this.

"Acceptance of the invitation." He confirmed, looking down from her to his book. "You have no need to be anxious. As I explained, as long

as you remain in appropriate areas you are more secure here than in soul society."

Kagome wanted to protest but she could not. For multiple reasons, she wanted to get on his good side but also he was right. If she had been safe, then she wouldn't be here now. Instead she just stared at him. He wasn't looking at her, but that made it easier to look at him.

His face was peaceful while blue-green eyes scanned whatever it was he was reading, darting back and forth across the page intently. His hair hung slightly over the left side of his face and was long enough that it fell down the entirety of his back. His uniform was pristinely white despite having blood stains only the day before but she supposed they must have extras. Beneath the cape he normally had on she could make out a coat with buttons on each side and a belt that matched the blue off-color of the otherwise white outfit. She supposed it was true that psychopaths could look like anyone.

"Is my appearance surprising to you?" He paused at the end of a page to glance to her, she looked away when he met her eyes. Would he know what she was contemplating?

"Yeah sort of, you looked peaceful for," Kagome stopped herself she wanted to make friends with him, not annoy him. This spy type acting was much more difficult than the way they talked about it in the movies. "well I just didn't expect you to be this."

"Capable of reading?" He continued to watch the girl that wouldn't meet his eyes, what was wrong with her the completely contradictory muted behavior compared to her fire yesterday was curious.

Kagome blinked and met his gaze again, blushing when he smiled at her faintly, this was so embarrassing. "Did you just tell a joke?"

Of course, the reports had said she could be strange as well so perhaps that was part of the reason for the change. Then again she was crying this morning when he'd walked in, she had tried to hide it but it would have been hard to miss. Was it just some attempt at manipulation?

Then, she looked honestly unsure of herself and slightly afraid of him but that was to be expected. She often was in the care of the powerful members of soul society and perhaps she'd grown accustomed enough that now she was starting to realize her position was more vulnerable. Her gaze was clear; she wore her emotions in those brown eyes edges still tinged with red from her earlier tears. She met his eyes only a short time before glancing away again, as if she were retreating from nothing more than a look from him.

"Um I think I'll just get a book and take it back to my room." Kagome said, she couldn't do this right now. It was too much he was going to figure out what she was trying to do. She walked past to the section she was already interested in. She was worried he was watching her until she heard the turning of a page. She peeked through the stack at him and was relieved that he had returned to his reading. Maybe she hadn't totally messed it up then even though it felt like it.

She found a book of fairy tales and picked it upâ€|really she was just content for anything at this pointâ€|she didn't want to dwell here. Before she walked past him again she had to pause to catch her breath. _"__You can do this Kagome. You can do this Kagome. You have survived the feudal era against numerous demons, the modern area against numerous demons, hollow, and arrancar. You are a strong, amazing, capable woman. You can get some weird Quincy to kiss you if you want too. Just seduce the guyâ€|even though he wouldn't hesitate to kill you at a word from his leader."_

Her bravado was quickly evaporating at that final thought when she rounded the corner. she could do thisâ€|she could do this. Justâ€|seduce a guy that wouldn't mind killing you at a word from his leader. She felt her bravado dying as she came around the corner. Haschwalth didn't even look up but she could still imagine the strange scale and the dark expression on his face when he'd killed Cang.

"Umâ€|" She knew she wanted to say something, but what did you say to someone to try and get them interested but also to be genuine and to keep them from worried you are trying anything? Eventually she managed to say something at least. "â€|Thanks. For the thought, the books I meanâ€|I appreciate it."

"You are welcome." Haschwalth answered, unsure whenever he'd last uttered that phrase to someoneâ€|or when he'd last been thanked. Glancing after her curiously when she rushed away after expressing her gratitude. He read another paragraph before glancing toward the end of the library where she'd vanished. He appreciated her politeness, even as awkward as she was. She'd managed to surprise him more than onceâ€|clearly he was not as informed involving the girl's behavior as he first believed.

****End Chapter****

Whew, that was challenging to write, I kept fighting over the scene with Haschwalth and Kagome at the end and what to do exactly. I wanted to capture them as IC but still within the confines of the plot as it's been laid out. I think I accomplished it finally.

****~Aura****

To my reviewer:

Daisynaruto909 â€" Heh, well, that will continue to be an issue even though so few people know about the pregnancy at all.

5. Strike

****Chapter Five:**** ****_Strike_****

_"_Failure does not build character, it reveals it."_

****_~Fionn Niall_****

"Do you think the girl is a threat?" Askin said, glancing mildly at his fellow Sternritter, bored while they waited for the right time

for their orders.

"Less than the new captain you were assigned to take out." Gerard answered with a scoff. "Assuming you man up enough to get your hands dirty."

"You assume I'll need to. It's not going to be the same as when he was fighting weaker sternritter." Askin replied with a shrug. "Besides, I wasn't asking about that."

"Who cares about some mortal girl?" Driscoll put in. "What possible threat could she be to his majesty? What a stupid question."

"Are you all going to argue? You know what Haschwalth would say." Gremmy commented, usually keeping himself uninvolved but not wanting to ire his king and the blonde that had already been murdering other members of the sternritter that failed. "He's already in a poor mood, let's not press it by fighting needlessly. You'll all get a chance at the enemy soon enough."

"Quite right." Gerard stated cheerfully.

Askin pursed his lips at the poorly mannered group and sighed. "Why on earth would you think I'd need to raise my hands against a Shinigami that hasn't even been around for years. The intel says he has had no real training while he's been sleeping. A weakling would pose more of a threat."

"Clearly not." Gremmy chimed in again. "They did defeat Cang somehow remember? I agree with the others; you'll probably have to get your hands dirty to defeat him."

The conversation continued to circle on itself from there.

Elsewhere in Silbern Kagome was staring at Haschwalth in confusion. "You are leaving? You said you were my guard."

"There will be other Quincy doing the job while I am gone but there are strict instructions that none of the quincy are to approach or speak with you unless you need help or leave the areas you are permitted to wander, which have been extended to the kitchens while I am gone." He explained in his usual bored tone of voice. Apparently he'd thought aheadâ€¦logical that they'd still want him for missions in soul societyâ€¦if he was as strong as was impliedâ€¦ "We'll be taking the king through the soul gate today."

"Umâ€¦okayâ€¦well I guess you can do that now? Either wayâ€¦why tell me?" Kagome was a bit confused by his sudden extra remark.

"It seemed best to remind you of your place here. You are our guest, but within the limitations laid out." He replied.

"Soâ€¦prisoner." Kagome replied in a deadpan, a little annoyed at the way he described her position as a guest. It probably was a mistakeâ€¦but she was frustrated and worried enough not to care. Could they really get through the gate into heaven? How many had been killed in soul society now? Her mind was wild with uncomfortable thoughts of what could have already happenedâ€¦was Byakuya all right?

"Behave yourself." Haschwalth reminded one more time, the words rolling off his tongue as he was very accustomed to saying them; specifically, in that order. He left then, the girl was clearly concernedâ€|and frustratedâ€|but she'd kept her cool better than yesterday. He was still having a difficult time gauging what her emotional status might be at any given turn or topic. He dismissed her a moment later as he stepped into the throne room with the others gathered, Yhwach was supposed to be here at any time.

****_Heaven - _****

Tricky bastard.

Sestran stared at his orb in frustrationâ€|the Quincy must suspect his ability to spy on Kagomeâ€|or they knew he could. The gold-haired ruler was certain that was the reason for Haschwalth's sudden blunt honesty with the timing of the attack. Either they were testing to see if his connection to her was real, which risked him being unable to warn soul society. Or they knew and wanted to play the game psychologically. Either way, they were winning at more levels than Sestran cared to admitâ€|and his hands were tied on a warning to his own troops. Switching his gaze, he took in the perimeter around the entry to the gate. The area was as fortified as he had ever seen it, but it wouldn't be enough for the troops from what he'd already witnessed. Byakuya had just come out of unconsciousness and was still too weak to be a major threat. Kenpachi was unfortunately one of their best combatants and he was unreliable as back up for the troops as a whole.

Kyoraku was incredibly skilled but his Bankai was not something to be counted on other than as a last resort. Soi Fong and Hitsugaya were capable but not up to the par of most of the others. The other captains and lieutenants were helpful but lacked the raw power in the majority of cases to be a true threat. The new soul-reaper was a wild card; he'd been helpful during the last battle but Sestran didn't know enough about his ability to make a fair judgement.

Ichigo and his friends from the mortal world would make a decent team as a threat to one of the enemyâ€|but they were still trying to escape the prison set up for Ichigo. Sestran's side simply lacked the number of truly exceptional individuals it would take to defeat the enemy. For now, he would have to hope that driving them back would suffice. If they were able to do thatâ€|but at least their power center was at a place where if he must open the gate and step through to help he couldâ€|as it was he wished he could do so ahead of time since he knew Yhwach was on the wayâ€|but he wasn't willing to put Kagome at risk if it was some sort of test.

Moments after he considering it, it was too late to change his mind, the Quincy started to appear in the courts for the third time in as many daysâ€|and the mines that had been placed as traps worked as alarms while they simultaneously injured the enemyâ€|Sestran stared at his orb not wanting to blink. The more he could learn about the enemy the better his army would be.

****_Soul Society â€" _****

There was little hope for much activity in the ambush before the explosions warned the soul reapers the sternritter had arrived again.

They were much more prepared in their ability to form a quick response and it was within less than a minute that they had prepared for battle and several had already met foes. Byakuya left the medical tent that had been erected when he heard people yelling for help despite the many bandages still on his arms and legs. He wasn't about to back down now however, this was the time he needed to get involved.

He felt the sweep of anger more strongly than usual when he rounded a corner to see a Quincy striking down an already injured soul reaper. It was the same worthless Quincy that had kidnapped his wife. Just seeing him standing there smugly set his blood boiling. He set a hand on his sword, pulling her out. "You are bold to come before me after what you didâ€¦"

"Is a gnat bold to appear before a wolf?" The blonde replied, turning to slash at Byakuya but finding his sword blocked. He hadn't expected thatâ€¦he had to admit this shinigami was one of the more dangerous ones. Haschwalth ducked beneath a return jab and found his own sword blocked againâ€¦earning a raised brow.

"What makes you consider yourself capable of landing a strike on me." Byakuya growled his voice deep, the distortion already appearing in his eyes as they bled black and the usual gray of his iris polished itself to gold, the mask starting to slowly form around his face.

>"Adopting your dark power early won't do you any good, the scales will always maintain balance." Haschwalth replied to Byakuya's taunt, swiftly blocking several more strikes, the swords singing with the speed of their attacks and parries. The point wasn't to kill Kuchiki yetâ€¦just to distract him, and clearly the kidnapping of his wife had succeeded at that.<p>

"Where is she?" The growl in Byakuya's voice maintained as they continued to fight, deeper even than a moment ago. He kept up with an ease unlike their last small spar, had he expanded this much in the last two days or was this just adrenaline? "Any harm done to her will be revisited ten-fold."

"The girl is safer with us than she ever would have been with you." Haschwalth remarked when Byakuya glanced toward other bursts of reiatsu. It was his mission to keep the 6th captain distracted until such a time as the signal, when he would kill him. He did not expect the cut across his cheek a moment later and leapt backward, though got no respite as the monster was on top of him, continuing his assault.

No more miasmas were made to Haschwalth's body but neither did he get hits on the captainâ€¦would he really have to become more violent for this to be maintained? How was the beast building in strength instead of decreasing? Vizard's were supposed to be on a limited time frame. Why wasn't Haschwalth's power of balance working as well as it should?

"When you fall at my hand I wonder if she will weep for you the way she cries about you in her nightmares." Haschwalth baited again, slightly frustrated by his own moment of distraction. His cheek certainly hurt more than a small strike should.

Haschwalth was forced back by a series of kido shot at him in a row.

Then Byakuya did something Haschwalth hadn't dared to hope for, he turned his sword vertically and dropped the blade into the ground. The phrase came that Haschwalth was amused by but hadn't expected. It was unlike the 6th squad captain to let himself get so worked up, particularly when he already knew it was possible to steal Bankai.

"Bankai, Senbonzakura Kageyoshi."

Haschwalth held forward his icon and for a moment the energy was drawn toward the device to steal Senbonzakura, then the small symbol shattered in his hand as the petals of Byakuya's zanpakuto swept over him. The blonde Quincy darted back again, struggling against the speed of the dark colored blades the captain's vizard form utilized.

"I admit; you are more skilled than I expected." Haschwalth commented with his usual calm, while he was having a harder time, he was still keeping up. He wasn't expecting what came next however.

"Senkai."

The black walls with floating blades closed them in. Byakuya was calling them down with frequency and control enough that even Haschwalth was cut several times in the interim. A frown settled on the Quincy's face and he turned his own sword horizontally in front of him. "I owe you an apology Captain Kuchiki, I have not taken you seriously enough until now. Allow me to remedy that."

Heaven

The captains, lieutenants, and other volunteers for aid had all separated to different tasks and war had once again enveloped the Sereitei. The few that had stood up to Ywach had been cut down by Gerard on their way to the many shield's surrounding the gate. He glanced over them, his dark eyes considering the many levels of spells that had been placed here. "Your efforts are for naught."

With a wave he'd absorbed the reiatsu of every single spell in place to protect the inner gate area, it seemed no more troublesome than if he'd batted away a fly. Then he was blocked by the unexpected arrival of Ichigo and the two began to tangle. Sestran had to admit, making the boy a substitute soul reaper had been one of his better ideas. As it was, it was very clear by the way the Quincy spoke and acted that he was not expecting to find Ichigo here. Even while the various battles took place the boy managed to press Ywach back. Sestran was so intent on Ichigo's conversation that he'd stopped paying attention to the others. The red haired boy was part Quincy as well? Well wasn't he just the mutt of the afterlife, would be be a bounty next?

Eventually Ichigo grew frustrated and drew his blade, but another unexpected development occurred. Haschwalth appeared and not only blocked Ichigo's sword, but snapped it in half. Sestran was as surprised as most that witnessed the motion.

The second in command of the Quincy hadn't escaped his battle with

Byakuya unscathed, he had some cuts that were bleeding into the white uniform and making his injuries all the more obvious. Sestran adjusted his view only a moment to consider Byakuya, he had survived but he was unconscious again—he was still unable to fully control this new power of his—had Haschwalth not left and came to the defense of his leader then Byakuya may not have survived.

When Sestran returned his gaze to the area near the gate the Quincy had already fled again—one more battle they'd survived—but they weren't winning this war. He sighed and hoped Kagome could do what he'd asked—it might be the only real hope they had.

****_Heaven—****

Kagome had eaten something and retreated to the library, sitting in the same area where she'd seen Haschwalth the night before. Still not sure how she was supposed to approach him. She was also nervous about what could be happening in soul society. Would they be all right? Was Byakuya all right? Would he be able to deal with what she still needed to tell him? Would he forgive her? She hadn't wanted this—whatever Sestran said—this was some cruel twist by the King she had thought was a friend—

The thought of it made her remember the chilling image of his face with the arrancar mask, had Sestran been involved in that as well? There was so much she didn't know and it was only eating at her more as time went on. It felt like it had been hours since they left but it couldn't have been that long. She'd only finished eating a little while ago.

"That's the great priestess everyone's talking about?" She heard the whisper from one of the other Quincy in the library. They'd all been around but they'd not approached her. She'd seen them whispering in the kitchens when she'd gotten herself some food but in the bustle she couldn't hear them there.

"Shh, she'll hear you." A second one hushed.

"So? What is she going to do? She's our prisoner remember." The first shrugged off the chiding.

Kagome sighed, she was all too aware of her position here.

"His majesty must have a reason to have bought her here." The second stated.

"Yeah, just like he had a reason not to make Haschwalth his successor and making it that upstart from the mortal world instead. He's a fountain of good ideas lately." The first scoffed.

"Do not question his majesty, what if someone hears you?" The second hissed.

Who were they talking about? Kagome frowned a little, considering. Ishida maybe? He was the only Quincy from the mortal world that she'd seen. Why was he working with them anyway? Did he hate the Shinigami that much? She scowled at the situation—but she didn't want to say anything—the more things she could overhear the better.

"Yeah yeahâ€|well, I'm not the only one thinking it." The first said.

"Just the only one stupid enough to say it." The second chided again. "His majesty has a plan, it's not our place to question it."

"Now you sound like Haschwalth." The first answered and Kagome had thought the same thing. Were a lot of the quincy here so mindlessly loyal? Why was that? Surely he was powerful but he was so willing to sacrifice his own underlings. A door opened further down, more other quincy coming in no doubtâ€|it changed the topic of conversation as a third voice arrived on the scene.

"They are back. It's pretty surprisingâ€|Haschwalth got injured." The new quincy remarked.

"What?" The other two were both shocked, and loud enough that they earned some other shushes from further down the long hall. Kagome was surprised too.

"I bet whoever his opponent was is toast now." The first of the voices chimed in.

"I wonder what his punishment will be." The second remarked.

She had to admit Haschwalth seemed to have quite a following of his own from her short observations. But who was it that had injured him? Kenpachi, Kyorakuâ€|Byakuya? She swallowed her nervousness at that thoughtâ€|if were they rightâ€|could Haschwalth have killed Byakuya? Then againâ€|if they were right and he was punished then he might not be alive to possibly get her out of this. She headed out of the room to search for the throne room she'd seen before. Sure it wasn't in her 'permitted areas' but she had to make sure the blonde wasn't going to be killed eitherâ€|

****End Chapter****

I didn't go into much detail about the fights or the conversation with Ichigo because it all happens in the manga so fans can always read through it. (Also, most of the fights with the different sternritter are pretty long and drawn out.) My focus is to retell what happened but not just sit and copy tons of the things that went on in the manga. I also avoided telling what happened between Haschwalth and Byakuya after that point since we don't know fully what Haschwalth can do in the manga yetâ€|though I'm certainly getting some ideas on what's happening there XD More to come later!

-Aura

To my reviewers:

Daisynaruto- We can, pretty happy with my new outline of events, at least for a time.

Guest â€" I don't particularly understand why you would think that a man wouldn't accept someone else's childâ€|the circumstances are dramatic because they are supposed to be, it's a drama. The plot will be Byakuya/Kagome because that's who she cares about and vice versaâ€|and love conquers all things, even the extremely confusing or

difficult times, it's not love if it's only under specific circumstance. Either way, I already have my general plots developed through a tentative end. I hope you decide to continue to give my fic a shotâ€|as I'd like everyone to enjoy itâ€|but if not that's okay too. I know that not all things I write will be in everyone's wheelhouse. I hope you find something you'll enjoy more.

6. Ambushes

****Chapter Six:**** ****_Ambushes_****

_"__If your attack is going too well, you are walking into an ambush."_

****_-Infantry Quotes_****

"I apologize your majesty. I will accept any punishment you deign is fit."

Sure enough, Kagome crept up to find her blonde kidnapper just throwing his neck out on the sacrificial plate. What had happened to him? There were several spots where blood had stained his usually pristine uniform and a mark along his left cheek where he was cut and it seemed somehow infected. Nasty painful looking black lines etched outward from the small wound, making it seem larger than it probably was. A poison of some sort perhaps? She'd need a closer look to be able to tell. As it was she wanted to wait and see what the leader would sayâ€|already not sure how she could protest even if 'His Majesty' wanted to kill the second in command.

"Your position is secure. Kuchiki's abilities remain one of the war powers we couldn't expect." Kagome let out a breath she didn't realize she'd been holdingâ€|her hands relaxed to. She'd had them in the position to cast her 'healing' spellâ€|the one that usually just destroyed whatever it was she wanted to fix.

As tempted as she was to spy moreâ€|pressing her luck seemed like a poor plan. She left them to speak, retreating back toward her 'safe zones' as she'd grown to call the different parts of her cell. She hadn't quite made it back when she was pushed into a wall. One of the Quincy, there were enough that it was one more she didn't recognize, apparently realized she was out of place.

"Well, well, what have we here. The little bird left its nest, not safe at all." His voice was ominous and the way he glanced her over was far from chaste. "Trying to escape? You know what the orders are if you are caught trying to escape."

"No. I'm notâ€|I just wanted to explore a littleâ€|I got bored." It was the first lie that came to mind and she was spooked enough by his aggressive approach that she thought she did a good job of it. "I was just trying to find my way back."

"Were you now, or were you off trying to spy on His Majesty and Haschwaldt?" The man clearly wasn't buying it. "Of courseâ€|now you are fair gameâ€|and I enjoy a bit of hunting now and then."

His hand pulled up the skirt she wore, she was disgusted and shockedâ€|as it was she was still uncomfortable with her lack of

memory involving Sestranâ€ and this baby. All the anger, fear, frustration, and stress builtâ€ and then snapped when the man stroked her inner leg.

Kagome cracked him with an uppercut followed by a kick to his nether regions, when he doubled over she followed it with a knee to his face. Her knee hurt but she didn't careâ€ she focused on her spell only slightly as she touched his back, calling on the magic that should help heal him. Instead blood burst from his right shoulder and further wounds snaked down his spine and around his chest. Kagome didn't stick around when he finally let go of her, his arm that had been holding her limp after her spell harmed him. She dashed down the long hall as swiftly as she could while eyeing the scant decorations in this place.

_"_Couldn't you bastards have a bow and arrow anywhere?"_ Kagome thought in frustration as she dashed around a corner, she couldn't count on her 'healing' spells constantly doing so much damage.
_"_Aren't you all freaking archers? Why don't youâ€|_"_

Her thought was cut short as the ground disappeared from underneath herâ€ after rounding another turn there were steps she didn't see coming. It was a wonder she managed to catch herself without going tumbling down them all the way. She slammed her ankle hard enough on the unbalanced landing that it sent flashes of pain along her leg. She wouldn't be able to move very wellâ€ and this area of the strange unfamiliar castle. Still, if she could make it to the library perhaps he'd stop since destroying the books was probably punishable by death or something knowing the extremists she was dealing with. Unfortunately, as she got the idea the bleeding Quincy rounded the corner and was glaring at herâ€ the library was still past him nowâ€ she knew it wasn't on a different floor.

"You aren't going to get away from me, how dare you injure me." He had his bow aimed on her and Kagome knew that this wasn't goodâ€ she had no way of blocking his arrows. She threw up her hands as he let the energy free but her already injured leg gave out and she tumbled a few more steps. Feeling where she would probably end up bruised with each roll. She saw and felt the flashes of energy going off to either side of her, and with the air already knocked out of her she couldn't even scream as she bounced haphazardly down the steps. She was disoriented and dizzy but with enough state of mind to know that when she did stop moving the man would probably kill her.

Soul societyâ€|

Lightning strikes were slamming into many areas of the city and those still licking their wounds were certainly having a harder time because of it. Many of the medical units were being moved to underground as a safety measure. Byakuya returned to consciousness at one that hit particularly close to the area where he was being rehabilitated. Sestranâ€ the King was angryâ€ livid judging by how the strikes were so common and the heavy rain and hail were beating into the ground.

"What's going on?" He asked, noting that Hanataro was the one nearest him working on fourth squadron work. "Did they make it through the gate?"

"Captain Kuchiki sirâ€|you should stay lying down." Hanataro

remarked, his voice raised to try and combat the winds echoing against tent walls. Byakuya hadn't moved yet, perhaps it was a force of habit to tell people to be still? "They didn't make it through the gateâ€|but we took some large hits. The new Shinigami has been missing since the battle, many of the other captains are injured as well. You'll need all the rest you can get."

"The storm?" He asked.

"It just startedâ€|" Hanataro answered, catching his balance when the earth shook slightlyâ€|frowning at the change. Was it even safe to move people underground in a time like this? If the quakes got worse that'd be more dangerous than being out here.

Byakuya just nodded, letting the boy return to his work. He laid back on the cot, ignoring the next strike of lightning. Sestran was clearly livid, but what could the enemy have done to cause him to lose his cool like thisâ€|

Kagomeâ€|

It was the only thing that he could reasonâ€|what had happened to her? He set his jaw, the beast inside him rumbling beneath the surface, the whispered promises of his returned wife and punished enemies tempting even in his pained state. He couldn't give into that despairâ€|he didn't know for certain if that was even the reason for this sudden change. There could be something none of them were aware of now that the gate had been closed for this longâ€|it could be that the enemy found a way in that wasn't hereâ€|though there was no positive reason for this sort of weather.

Then as quickly as it started, it ceased. Byakuya might have laughed under better circumstances, the boy king was learning controlâ€|he had to give him that much. At least it was a sign that Kagome likely wasn't involved. Just laying here to recover was difficultâ€|Kagome was still goneâ€|and he had failed to fell the man that had taken her. More than his pride felt empty as a result of her absence, they still had much they needed to speak ofâ€|to fix after the last enemy harmed his memoriesâ€|after he had harmed herâ€|but she knew himâ€|and that was a startâ€|

"The girl is safer with us than she ever would have been with you."

The man was mocking himâ€|but Byakuya wasn't certain that his words were false. Kagome had never possessed the sort of safety at his side that the captain thought he could offer her. It was why he'd once offered her to Sestranâ€|he closed his eyes, angry at himself for his shortcomingsâ€|

"I wonder if she will weep for you the way she cries about you in her nightmares."

Byakuya's own dreams disturbed when he fell back into unconsciousness around the same time as that thoughtâ€|

_Silbern (Quincy Land) â€" _

"I was going to go easy on youâ€|but nowâ€|you've injured me." The man pressed against her as opposed to shooting her again. He was on

top of her and it was difficult to struggle when her body was still trying to find equilibrium after the long tumble. However, when he leaned close, even though she saw almost two of him with her blurry gaze she slammed her forehead into his nose, coughing as blood gushed out on her face and in her mouth. She spit his own blood back in his face a moment later. The motion had forced him back slightly though and she was about to move when he slammed her shoulders into the ground, knocking her head hard enough against the ground that darkness spun around her and spots in her eyes threatened to steal her consciousness.

"You do like to cause trouble." The voice was that of her original kidnapper. She registered that the weight was gone toward the end of the statement itself. Fighting to make out what was happening with the sparks still in her eyes she could tell that Haschwalth had not only pulled the other quincy off her but had also thrown him down the new hall she'd ended up in.

"Don't give me that." Her attacker spit out his own blood on the carpet, it was still running out of his lip where she'd busted it. "She was out of her area and I was just following orders."

Kagome was still trying to decide if the opening comment about trouble-making was aimed at her, the quincy, or both of them? Probably the last one. She struggled to get up but the room spun and her foot refusedâ€|the farthest she made it was to her knees.

"Orders were to detain or kill herâ€|it is clear neither was your goal. Do not let this happen again." Haschwalth replied, his fingers tightening on the grip of his sword. "You failed to detain herâ€|she injured youâ€|report for judgement."

"Tch, yeah rightâ€|no way I'll..." The other quincy was silenced when the blade cut him in halfâ€|Kagome realized for the first timeâ€|this Quincy was the same one she'd heard in the libraryâ€|had he been following her and planning this? She stared in shock at the way his corpse, in pieces, lay on the floor now. She'd seen her fair share of deathâ€|but most of the monsters faded awayâ€|she hadn't actually seen that many bodiesâ€|

"Are you all right?" Haschwalth offered her a hand when he asked the question, his cape interrupting her line of sight. The steel dropping out of his voice as though he hadn't just murdered another member of his own troops. "You appear to hold your own better than I would expect."

"Not really." She answered honestly, still angry and in pain. She still accepted the help up, stumbling a little when she tried to put weight on her ankle, and holding herself up on the wall insteadâ€|she wasn't able to put weight on it. "I told him I was just lost. I don't suppose you have crutches."

Haschwalth raised a brow slightly, the silent glance saying all he didn't as to how much he bought her story. Maybe she just would never be any good at this lying thing. She instead blinked at the mark on his cheekâ€|it already looked larger than beforeâ€|maybe just because she was close now. It seemed as though for all the pain in her leg that wound must be worse. There were lines that looked almost like cracks in his flesh that extended from the area.

"Are you all right?" She repeated his question back to him.

"One must take their own losses in stride." Haschwalth dismissed his wounds outright. "The society has proven more problematic than we first believed."

"The other personâ€¦the one you foughtâ€¦" She swallowed, not wanting to say it aloud.

"It was Kuchiki." He finished her thought for her, then shook his head at her shocked and worried expression. "He was not killed in the battle."

"But he was injured." Kagome stated with a dark expression, letting out a shout when Haschwalth picked her up. "Whaâ€¦what are you doing!?"

"It is more efficient to return you to your room like thisâ€¦your ankle, you cannot walk on it." He wasn't looking at her, staring down the hall as he took her, but he had to have been as aware of the stares and whispers of passerby as she was. Godâ€¦beyond embarrassingâ€¦it was pathetic to be carried by the same man that had just admitted to harming her husband. Still, the wounds he gotâ€¦they had to have been because of the hollow part of Byakuyaâ€¦Senbonzakura had never caused this sort of injury in the past. It still seemed to be growingâ€¦the scar looked bigger again than earlier, if only slightly soâ€¦

Kagome reached up without thinking about it, curious about the wound. When her hand touched the scaring light enveloped his cheek in a flash and she felt gravity only a moment before hitting the floorâ€¦

Kagome's body as well as her mind had taken several blows today, being dropped to the ground again should have been the least of her worries but she still cursed and it still hurt. "What the hell is your problem? I was just curious."

Haschwalth was staring at her in surprise, eyes flickering between several emotions so swiftly she knew she had to have missed several. This was the most emotional reaction she'd seen him have over anything.

****End Chapter****

Heh, oh Kagome. She's always too nice for her own goodâ€¦even when she's not she usually still is. Resilient I guessâ€¦but she would have to be.

Aura

To my reviewers:

Sometimes my chapter quotes are clues for future plotting...just leaving this here.

****Chapter Seven:**** ****_Lift/Break_****

"Treat others with kindness. You never know what burdens people bear or what they are going through. You may have the power to lift their spirits or break them."

****_-Nishan Panwar_****

Haschwalth glanced to his face in one of the windows of the hall, looking at his reflection and noting that the wound was gone. He pulled up one of his sleeves to look at his arm—but Kagome didn't see an injury there either.

"How did you—" He paused and shook his head, regaining his composure before bending down to pick her up again, glancing to her when she batted his hand away.

"No thanks—if you're gonna just drop me I would rather not be carried." Kagome snapped, it was harsher than she should have been—but that hurt! She used the wall to pull herself up, leaning on it and keeping weight off her injured foot. Her door was only about ten feet now—she could hop there with the wall to lean on.

"How did you accomplish that?" He asked, catching her hand when she started to stumble on her attempt to reach her door. The girl was this accomplished of a healer? That's something they hadn't been told either—of course, he didn't see what use Ywhach would have for such abilities—he could already heal anything. The fact that he hadn't healed Haschwalth already had been his punishment for not finishing his mission fully. Subtle but present.

"I dunno—weird things happen sometimes with me. I never fully trained my priestess powers." Kagome answered honestly. "I thought if I saw and felt the wound I might be able to figure out a salve for it."

"For what purpose? No matter what aid you offer I will not leave His Majesty's side." Haschwalth stated, opening her door for her, almost smiling at the hateful expression she shot the distance from her door to the bed. He picked her up and moved her to it, setting her down despite her protests and bending down to look at her leg. "Your kindness will not interrupt my killing Captain Kuchiki the next time our paths cross. Aiding me only offers me an advantage when that—"

He stopped speaking as he caught her wrist before she could slap him. Before he'd been able to look at her swelling ankle in detail he glanced to her at her attempted assault. Chocolate eyes were wet but she hadn't let that moisture fall just yet. The glare she offered him gave him a moment of pause—

"How dare you—" Kagome could barely get the words out, she was so angry. It was only her desire to be capable of still somehow turning this in her favor that kept her from saying so much more—she wanted to destroy this man. She wanted to see Senbonzakura carve him so deeply that his soul wouldn't be able to forget the petals of her husband's sword. She shook with her rage—with everything that she didn't say—

"That was crude of me." Haschwalth stated after taking a breath, setting her hand back on her lap gently. "I apologize. I shall not speak of the fate of soul society again."

"__To kick your assâ€|"__ Kagome thought at him, her expression apparently giving her away because he smirked slightly after the look she leveled.

"It is gracious; the faith you place in them." He stated, picking back up her ankle gently, moving slowly when she wincedâ€|it was very swollen, and starting to blacken. "What happened with Bast exactly?"

"Bast?" Kagome was confused by the change of topic for a moment. "The jerk that attacked me? He attacked meâ€|so I ranâ€|I fell down some steps when I was running away."

"And his injuries?" Haschwalth kept the change of topic. A hostage that didn't look as though she wanted to murder him in his sleep was more likely to remain compliant. He held his hand over her wound, a pale blue light emanating from it where he started to heal her. At least she stayed still and accepted his gesture, it was the least he could do since he'd done the same for him, accidentally or otherwise.

"â€|a miscast spell." Kagome shrugged.

"That was a miscast spell?" The blonde asked skeptically. It'd been years since he had the need to speak to anyone outside of the militaristic format of his life so this was difficult. He did feel slightly guilty for basically telling the girl he was going to murder her husband. It was true, but she didn't need to hear it.

"Well, I always miscast thingsâ€|I figured out a while ago my light spells explodeâ€|less than they used to. Sometimes when I heal people they get injuredâ€|but usually only when I'm tryingâ€|when I'm not tryingâ€|like in the hallway they seem to work fine... I guess it's good I can call on them reliably sometimes, but if I hurry or it's an emergency they always miscast." Kagome explained, just as grateful for the change of conversation.

"So you've converted the mistakes for battle purposes?" Haschwalth nodded at that. "Impressive way to adjust to the situation."

"Thanks I thinkâ€|" Kagome said warily. Why was he suddenly being nice now? Was he up to the same thing she was? Was he trying to bring her to their side.

"Magic is difficult for you then?" He was still healing her leg. He was doing it slowly deliberately, in part to extend the conversation and in part because it would be less painful for her.

"It's always been. I never really had much training and even when I did, excelling wouldn't be the word to describe how I did." Kagome answered.

"I can relate." Haschwalth stated, a small smile forming at the skeptical expression he was offered in return. "You do not believe meâ€|but I was quite weak when I was young. I have had to study and train extensively for centuriesâ€|and I only improved because of his

Majesty's touch."

"Let me guess—and I too can benefit for the low low cost of my soul or something?" Kagome pursed her lips, unaware how right she was. "Is that why you are being nice to me? Healing me when it would probably be easier to just let me be injured so I'd have a harder time if I tried to escape. For animate as you are about not joining us, don't think I'm going to join you either. I'll let you kill me first."

"I find that most individuals that speak so lightly of life are less willing to part with it when the time comes." Haschwalth answered, finishing his own spell and looking at her ankle. "Besides, you healed me, there is a balance to be kept."

"Well most individuals haven't already died before." Kagome answered. "Don't worry about balance, I know I won't come over to your side. I can meet every ounce of your dedication to my own cause."

Haschwalth stared at her curiously after the declaration. Certainly her words reflected in her eyes. Moments ago she was physically shivering in anger and now she was calm and steadfast. All over the place was becoming the norm for her. She was certainly interesting—and he found that he was drawn to the mystery of her paradoxical behavior. If nothing else, there was undeniable beauty in her devotion—

When she blushed he realized he'd been staring longer than he meant to and stood up. "Completely healed but prevent further descent down the steps. I will be going"

"Right—" She remained quiet after the way he stared at her. Her mouth was dry and there were butterflies in her stomach. That wasn't right at all—this man insulted her husband—she should only have distaste for him.

"I will bring you dinner later." Haschwalth commented before closing the door.

"Okay, don't forget." Kagome called after him. He'd forgotten that morning, only came to her with the news he'd been leaving and she seemed to be hungry all the time. She sighed after he left, scowling at her own mixed feelings on the enemies here.

What was this girl? Certainly she might be more of a threat than he first believed. This weak mortal girl, unable to fully defend herself even against the lowest level of Quincy had brought him to pause with nothing more than a stare. It was only for a moment, but he recognized the flicker of fear for what it was—then there was the matter of his own distraction at times when she was present. He didn't feel any powers, but did she have some they couldn't detect?

He dismissed it a moment later. It wouldn't matter, the war would be over soon.

_Heaven—

Sestran would be amused by the situation if it was anyone else—but since the person stuck in the enemy realm failing to seduce the enemy was Kagome he did not find the normal entertainment he would

otherwise. Even for being kidnapped and held against her will Kagome was acting strangely. She'd gotten over her attack quickly enough, which was in her normal character, even her actively managing to reign in her temper was believable. The way she blushed when the enemy stared at her wasn't all an act and Sestran knew her well enough to know that there could be more to her reactions.

Had the rift between Kagome and Byakuya grown so great that she wouldn't forgive the captain? Or that she was considering this enemy more than Sestran ever dreamed she would? He certainly wouldn't have told her to abuse the possible presence of Majesty within her if that was the case. Byakuya would be up in arms if he knew it was just as well he didn't. Of course, Kagome often saved herself too perhaps she was being taken in by the ideal of someone saving her even if it was her own kidnapper.

Kagome, the victim of Stockholm syndrome? That too sounded out of place, but Sestran supposed he could buy it. She'd always been one that adjusted well enough to new circumstances, he'd been the reason her resilience was tested several times in the past. Still, he wished he knew more there was something strange about her behavior. He was starting to wonder if the ludicrous Quincy that could control affections might have influenced her but that particular enemy's powers seemed to work in less subtle ways.

There was always the possibility that she was being influenced somehow without knowing it. Haschwalth was often offering to bring her food after all could they be poisoning her?

Sestran sighed, all of this theory crafting wasn't going to do the battle situation any good. Somehow the new shinigami working with Yourichi and several of the lieutenants had managed to fell Askin but he seemed to have exploded in the process. So their new asset seemed to already be gone not that Sestran minded the help but he hated losing any resources. Several more lieutenants were gone, and another of the captains as well. Most of the fights came to draws but the enemy side certainly had fewer casualties than they did. It was likely the next time they came they would break through into heaven Sestran had to stop waiting for it to happen. He needed to bring the fight here if it's where it would eventually end up

****End Chapter****

People can theory craft all they like with what's going on with Kagome if they like, I'm always curious what my readers think reasons are. I obviously already know what I'm planning but I'm still curious.

Aura

To my reviewers:

Neo-Crystal - I'm glad my return makes you happy. Though I have to be honest there are probably only a couple more chapters before I'll reach a point that I need to know more of the manga and what's happening (despite having my own ideas) so I'll have to wait after those. Unless suddenly Kubo goes over what I plan to use which I doubt will happen soon. However, I am contemplating a Kagome/Haschwalth coupling in another fic which was never an

intention until how my plot so far here worked out and I decided I thought they were sort of cute. Funny how things work out.

8. Fallen

****Chapter Eight:**** ****_Fallen_****

_"__Sometimes it takes a good fall to really know where you stand."_

****_-Hayley Williams_****

"Getting a little friendly with the girl aren't you Haschwalth, here I thought you only had eyes for our Majesty." Pepe teased when Haschwalth walked into the most recent meeting, earning snickers from several of the others.

"If you question his Majesty's placement of the girl, feel free to bring it up with him." Was all the second in command offered, otherwise not deigning to dignify the other Quincy with an answer.

"I have to agree; don't think I've seen you spend so much time with someone one on one." Gerard remarked, he remained in fine condition despite a few bouts on their last trip. He'd certainly done far more damage to the enemy than he had taken.

"Not for a long time anyway." Bazz-B remarked, a bit irritated with Haschwalth's distraction.

"You all shouldn't be so happy." Driscoll stated with a frown. "We lost Gremmy and Askin yesterday."

"If they lost, then they were not worth the time." Yhwach stated as the Quincy king came into the room. "We will break into heaven tomorrow. We'll offer them one last day of respite, everyone be prepared to attack just before dawn. Haschwald, come."

As quickly as he'd arrived he left again, leaving the group glancing between themselves. Not that their leader had ever been a man of many words but that was a short meeting even by their standards.

"I got out of bed for that?" Pepe sighed. "None of you understand that I need my beauty sleep."

"There isn't enough sleep in the world to make you beautiful." Bazz stated in a deadpan.

"Descent is growing in the troops." Haschwald stated when they'd gotten out of earshot of the others. "The front lines have taken considerable damage, more than we predictedâ€|"

"The girl?" Yhwach asked. "She remains an unknown."

"She is not willing to side with us but neither is she a threat to us. She could barely defend herself against the lower ranks." The blonde explained dutifully. "She could be capable if trained properly."

"No time." Yhwach dismissed the possibility. "As long as she is kept out of things all will go as planned. Lock her down again tonight, by whatever means are required, she is not to interfere tomorrow."

"Yes your majesty." Haschwald nodded to his orders without hesitation. Glancing after Yhwach when he walked away, which was the same as a dismissal for the second in command.

****_Laterâ€¦_****

"You remembered." Kagome seemed surprised when he arrived later, though he didn't have food with him and she did her best to cover her disappointment.

"I thought you would prefer to eat outside of your room. I had a table set up." He stated, it wasn't really an offer so much as a polite demand but Kagome nodded nonetheless, putting her bookmark in the book she'd borrowed.

"Thanksâ€¦" She stated it in the hesitant tone of voice she used when she wasn't sure if she should actually appreciate what was being offered to her. Haschwald waited until she came to close the door and walked slowly enough that she could fall into step.

"You aren't off to attack again?" She chanced the question.

"We should avoid the topic of the Quincy conquest but allowing for one question to ease your concern, we have yet to return to the soul society." Haschwalth reassured, not wanting a repeat of the poor reaction from earlier.

"Goodâ€¦" She seemed to breathe easier at the information. For all her conviction, she was still worried for the people she'd gotten to know living in the land of the dead.

"You are adjusting to being here very quickly." Haschwalth observed.

"Well, it's nicer than most of the times I've been kidnapped." Kagome admitted.

"Does it happen with such frequency?" He asked, curious as to her nonchalant attitude.

"You'd be surprised. Not as much latelyâ€¦but it used to happen a lot back when I was fifteen. I understood it then, I was usually something they could useâ€¦but you allâ€¦I couldn't keep up to any of you in combatâ€¦and you haven't actively asked for anything. I don't understand your reasoning." Kagome hoped he might elaborate more if she continued explaining her own story.

"You speak as if it is natural for a girl to be taken by strangers with frequencyâ€¦" Haschwalth was still surprised by her explanation.

"Wellâ€¦no. I guess that's not true. But they needed me for my powers, you don'tâ€¦so why take me at all?" Kagome asked.

"You are a variable difficult to predict." He answered, taking her into a room. It was simple as the other had been but instead of a

desk there was a small table set up with food on it. He held her chair for her and she blushed but accepted the help. Dining with enemiesâ€|sure why notâ€|

"Soâ€|you took me because I'm chaotic?" Kagome was pretty sure there was insult somewhere in there.

"I would choose the adjective unique." Haschwalth offered after taking his own seat. He was loathe to bring up the battle tomorrow. After all, he had every intention of killing the woman's husband and here he was seated and having a polite meal with her. He had to remain steadfast, but there was guilt lingering in the back of his mindâ€|he found that he didn't want to end up on the negative side of this woman for the rest of his existenceâ€|

"Are you all right?" Her question drew him out of his thoughts. "You seemed sad just now."

"I am fine." He answered.

"Everyone's the sameâ€|no one that says that ever is actually fine." Kagome pointed out, not for the first timeâ€|others had said it to her as well. It felt strange saying it to her kidnapperâ€|but she had to keep it upâ€|the sooner she could convince him to kiss her the better. Whatever Sestran must have in mind it might really helpâ€|

"While I appreciate that bit of wisdom, I assure you it's nothing to concern yourself over. Shall we?" He gestured at the food and she nodded. She ate slowly, eying the fact that he'd brought wineâ€|was he going to ply her with alcohol now?

"May I have a water?" She asked.

"Our intelligence stated that you drink wine." Haschwalth remarked.

"You aren't drinking any." She pointed out. She'd rather sound paranoid than tell them she's pregnant. If they figured out she had Sestran's child inside her she was certain her situation would change.

While watching her he lifted his glass and swirled the red liquid a moment before taking a sip.

"Wellâ€|I'd still rather have water." She remarked, glancing away from him after he silently called her bluff.

"If you would prefer," He got up and left for a moment, making her sigh in relief that he didn't look further into it. He returned after a moment with her water and set it down.

"Thank youâ€|" She murmured, feeling awkward as she picked at the food. It wasn't bad, not Kuchiki family quality but more than acceptableâ€|stillâ€|she found herself taking few bites.

"Are you unwell?" He inquired.

"I just am not really that hungry." Her stomach felt out of placeâ€|but she wasn't nauseous, just nervous. "It's weird when

you're here" "

"If I'm making you uncomfortable I can leave." He remarked after several minutes of the silence, he set his hand down to get up but was shocked when she set her fingers over his.

"No" "it's not that" "I just" "I'm not sure how to explain it." Kagome answered, swallowing when he met her eyes.

"__Just tell him!"_

"I get butterflies in my stomach when you look at me."

She was as surprised as he was that she had said it out loud" "Sestran had influenced her somehow" "it was his voice that pressured her just before she confessed it. Oh god" "what the hell was he doing?"

"I" "I'm sorry" "I didn't mean to say that. I was answering" "and I just" "oh my goodness" " Kagome was ready to start hyperventilating. That was wrong on every possible level but it hadn't been a lie" "it didn't matter though" "she loved Byakuya, having feelings, even of the slight crush variety" "weren't okay! She covered her face with both hands, wishing she could run away. "Haschwalth, please forget I said that" "

"Jugram." He stated, pulling her hands down from her face" "he was now bending next to her on her side of the table and she felt herself blush even more. Could this day get worse? "My name...you are welcome to use it. However, I don't think I can oblige you in forgetting such a memorable confession."

"No" "I am not" "

"Don't concern yourself Kagome" "I am not interested in such a relationship." He stated, though his expression and eyes held a sadness that made her not believe him. "Nonetheless, the compliment is one of the finest I've had in years. Thank you."

Then he did it" "he bent forward and pressed his lips into the back of her hand" "it happened so quickly she doubted she could have interrupted even if she'd wanted to.

****End Chapter****

Shorter than usual but a great place to call it. Kagome is going to murder Sestran one of these days, probably" "if ever given the chance.

_ -Aura_

To my reviewers:

9. Persevere

****Chapter Nine:*****_Persevere_****

"__If heaven and hell decide that they both are satisfied, illuminate the 'no's' on their vacancy signs. If there's no one

beside you when your soul embarks, then I'll follow you into the dark." _

** -Death Cab for Cutie, ****_I Will Follow You Into The Dark
Lyrics_**

Haschwalth's lips tingled with a muted electricity as they barely brushed her handâ€|the shock of reiatsu he recognized as some form of power but when he went to draw his sword he couldn't manage to pull it. He couldn't keep the surprise from his face when he looked at Kagomeâ€|the guilt in her eyes didn't make him feel betterâ€|he'd have already slain her if he could bring his body to draw the blade. "What did you do?"

"Uhâ€|could you let go of your sword?" She asked, blinking when he immediately did soâ€|his movement was rigid, as though he was fighting it. That's when she realized what Sestran had meant to do all alongâ€|this was Majesty? She didn't feel any differentâ€|other than having strange butterflies for the blonde that was now glaring at her. "Take me back to soul society."

She tried itâ€|unsure if it would work. Haschwalth set his jaw a moment before he grabbed her shoulders and pulled her through a portal. She was slightly dizzy on the other side but he steadied her and she glanced around. Frowning at the decrepit landscape her home had becomeâ€|the Quincy had done incredible damage to soul societyâ€|it looked to be nearly in ruins other than patches of intact buildings here and there. "Thisâ€|the quincy did this?"

"Yes. What is this? How are you controlling me?" His voice was icy, and she glanced to himâ€|of course he might not know about Sestran's abilityâ€|and even if he did he probably couldn't guess that she shared itâ€|likely because of the child not yet showing in her belly. She glanced to him after surveying the land and then swallowed, the dark expression on his face lacked any of the moments of compassion she'd seen until now.

"I'm sorryâ€|I don't fully understand it myselfâ€|please don't hate me. It wasn't my ideaâ€|I just wanted to get home." Kagome stated, a bit sad at the idea that he might not forgive her. This seemed more extreme than what Sestran hadâ€|was it because she had no way of controlling it? Sestran said he suppressed his own aura most of the timeâ€| "But no one is hereâ€|do you know where they are?"

"There were troops when we last attacked, though they were centralized around the gate leading to Heaven." Haschwalth answered darkly, her entreaty for understanding clearly dismissed. Kagome sighed and started walking toward the gate.

"Was this the plan all along?" He asked.

"Noâ€|Iâ€|" Kagome frownedâ€|why should she be giving him any informationâ€|what if her ability came to an end? She didn't know what might be safe to explain or not. "â€|it's complicated. I am sorry thoughâ€|"

She seemed genuine enough, and every cell in his core ached to believe it even though his mind told him it wasn't trueâ€|that this influence was beyond her power. The only thing close to this described in the intelligence was the power of the soul kingâ€|so how

was she wielding it now? Could he pass it on to others then? Not that the information did him much good while he remained the girl's puppet.

"I believe youâ€¦" Haschwalth finally said slowly. He wasn't sure himself if it were trueâ€¦he wanted toâ€¦but he also knew that his emotions were just as influenced by this power. "There, troops are aheadâ€¦I doubt my presence will be tolerated without violence."

"Don't hurt anyone." Kagome said with a shake of her headâ€¦ "I'll try to explainâ€¦"

She got the feeling that Sestran would already knowâ€¦but that's not who she wanted to talk to.

"Hey, don't shootâ€¦we're hereâ€¦under good terms. Haschwalth is surrendering, he'll help the Shinigami from now on." Kagome remarked, able to feel the heat of the death look he was leveling at her for those words. At least for now this bizarre ability seemed to be sticking. "Where is Byakuya?"

"He's in heaven with the othersâ€¦but let us send a messageâ€¦the Quincy's not allowed in." The guard commented, they'd barely stopped staring at the member of the enemy army standing nearby, loathing everything for his inability to act on his own.

"Kagome."

The deep voice that intoned those three syllables made her break into a smile so big she thought it might injure her face. Whatever they needed to talk aboutâ€¦the large arms that wrapped around her felt like home. She returned the embrace, tempted to cry at the sudden flood of emotions. Relief, love, happiness was paramount, but there was an underlying fear and something else she couldn't quite place.

"Byakuyaâ€¦I'm sorry. I have so much I want to tell youâ€¦and we should have talked beforeâ€¦then everything happened and I didn'tâ€¦"

He set a finger on her lips. "Kagomeâ€¦slow down. I'm just glad to have you back. I won't let go of you again."

"Until someone else kidnaps her or kills you." Haschwalth remarked in a tone so bitter he surprised himself. Still, he couldn't back up the words, he might as well have been a marionette for as much as he could move against the soul reapers. He was confused as well as angry and disturbed at this scene of the girl and her captain.

"Sestran explained that he somehow temporary passed Majesty to youâ€¦I didn't believe it possible butâ€¦it seems you've proven it." Byakuya remarked in his cool manner, back to the serious person she remembered. Kagome nodded, she had more to explain as to her hypothesis about thatâ€¦but here wasn't the time or place.

"I thought he couldn't open the gate to other soul reapers either?" Kagome asked.

"When he was asked, all he told Kyoraku was that he'd made

upgradesâ€|though I dislike the poor security of it." Byakuya replied. As much as he wanted to kill the Quincy, he was under orders to unless the man attacked first. Kagome didn't look harmed despite her days in enemy hands, which helped stay his temper along with the time he'd managed to spend practicing his mastery of his darker half.

"We need to speak. Jurgâ€|Haschwalth, please wait here with the guards until I return, defend the gate if other Quincy try to enter." She wasn't sure how far she could push itâ€|and certainly if he didn't wish her dead before he likely did now. His rage was almost palpable in the air. She couldn't meet his eyes and instead reached out to entwine her fingers with Byakuya's. "Let me see what's become of our home?"

Byakuya glanced at the rigid movements of the Quincy and the hesitant but forced motions fell in line with what someone under majesty did even if they didn't wish to. Byakuya pulled Kagome into his arms and flash stepped away to the only half-destroyed Kuchiki manor. "The damages could have been worse. Some of the rooms did survive."

Kagome frowned at the destructionâ€|so little remainedâ€|it seemed as if some horrible natural disaster had swept through. Was this what the enemy was capable of? She took a deep breath, not sure if any time would be the right time to tell Byakuya about herâ€|condition. "I need to tell you somethingâ€|"

She remembered asking his grandfather for adviceâ€|and that she was told to just be honestâ€|she should have been sooner than thisâ€| "I'mâ€|pregnant."

"I know." Byakuya settled his arms around her, nuzzling her hair she could feel the slight smile on his face. She blinked several times in confusion, for all the reactions she'd pictured in her mind during her imprisonment that was the last.

"Youâ€|know?" Kagome asked.

"It was mentioned already, the strange soul reaper that said you found him. I think that it will be difficult at firstâ€|what with this warâ€|but once it's complete we'll rebuild and make certain you and the baby are well taken care of and safe." Byakuya explained, "You'll need to be more carefulâ€|stop running into danger."

Kagome shook her head and turned around, her brows furrowing in confusion. "Howâ€|whatâ€|you are okay with this?"

"Why wouldn't I be okay with it?" Byakuya asked.

That's when she realized, Byakuya thought the child was his. Her heart sunk, she'd been so prepared to rip the band aid offâ€|but this. How was she supposed to explain the circumstances when he looked so happy? When was the last time he'd looked so delightful in his pride? Before she'd gone to heavenâ€|before Sestran's plot had done this to herâ€|she still remembered extremely little about that dayâ€|and the morale in the war would drop out if she gave bad news and caused Byakuya to lose control of that thing inside him. Sestran had told her she would hate the leader somedayâ€|so far he was proving himself right. Sestran couldn't have told Byakuya about this

in the interim? For a godly being he sure was proving to be useless when she needed him.

Godâ€¦what should she do?

"Kagome, what's wrong? Aren't you happy? Why are you crying?" Byakuya asked, suddenly concerned. His voice inching into a deeper malevolent tone with the next question. "Did that Quincy harm you?"

"No, Iâ€¦it'sâ€¦when I was on the other side of the gateâ€¦promise you won't freak out." Kagome babbled a moment before asking for the promise. His grey eyes darted between hers, but she realized she'd said too much already when they grew steely.

"The Majesty you usedâ€¦I should have known." The single bitter laugh he let out bit into her soulâ€¦god, why did Sestran put them in this situation? "The child isn't mineâ€¦"

"I didn't want toâ€¦I don't even remember what happened." Kagome said immediately, which got him to look at her with confusion.

"What do you remember?" Byakuya said trying to keep from gritting his teeth, trying to keep his darker half in control. Whatever happenedâ€¦he wasn't going to risk hurting her againâ€¦he'd just gotten her back.

"Sestran said that something Naraku did put me under his influenceâ€¦and that this was the only way that it could be broken. Heâ€¦" She broke off, he was already well beyond most times she'd seen him really angry, his spiritual energy was rising quickly. "Iâ€¦I promise I didn't know."

"I believe you." Byakuya answered. He remembered Kagome nearly dying as a result of her attachment to Sestran, of her memories that if broken would result in her death. What did she know of that? Anything? If not, he couldn't tell her and risk setting off the chain again. This was the fix Sestran did? The coward didn't even tell him that he'd been with Kagomeâ€¦he just let him go on thinking that the child was his ownâ€¦

Byakuya felt slightly sick as he considered itâ€¦he remembered telling Sestran that he should stay with Kagomeâ€¦that he had given up since he couldn't protect herâ€¦after he'd attacked her. He hadn't meant itâ€¦not reallyâ€¦was this Sestran's cruel form of punishment for Byakuya's moment of weakness? Had Sestran decided to take Byakuya up on his offer when he was so frustrated that Byakuya had given up on another way out for Kagome? Was this his own doing? He'd been too weak to protect her againâ€¦

"I know a lot's happened, and I know you weren't always yourselfâ€¦and I know that there's something more to you nowâ€¦and whatever it is I don't care. If you become a monster, I'll love you anyway and if I have to I'll become a monster too then so be it. I want to work this outâ€¦there's nowhere else I belong but at your side. â€¦please don't hate me Byakuya." Her statement started strong but as it wound toward the end sounded so timidâ€¦and brokenâ€¦not the strong woman he'd come to loveâ€¦but he still held her tighter for itâ€¦pushing the anger away for now. He'd done this to herâ€¦and he would not leave her as a result of it.

"I will be here Kagome; I'll always be here. I wish I could always protect you, that I could pluck you away from danger without hesitation or worry and I will always try, but when I can'tâ€¦in those darkest moments when I failâ€¦I will always be here to hold you when I find you again." He reassured, backing up and frowning more at the tears along her face, using his scarf to wipe them away. "I won't let you go againâ€¦I should be the one asking you to forgive me."

She leaned up and kissed him, it was as best an answer as she could have given, their arms wrapped around one another. Sestran would pay for thisâ€¦whatever twisted thing this plot of his wasâ€¦but not right nowâ€¦right now Byakuya was where he belongedâ€¦and where he would stay for as long as she needed him. The war, the wholesale destruction of the world be damned, his wife was the first priorityâ€¦

For the first time since it awakenedâ€¦the darkness inside him was silent.

****End Chapter****

I loved writing this chapter. I was so looking forward to this discussion/conversation between these charactersâ€¦and yay, fluff. So much fluff compared to all the other dark things happening. They make each other better no matter the circumstance. More drama to come!

-Aura-

P.S. To anyone that doubted this was a Kagome/Byakuya fic: *mic drop*. That is all.

To my reviewers:

Neo-Crystal â€" Yes, here. One last chapter for nowâ€¦until I know more about the Quincy's end game plans in the manga.

End
file.